

Adult education faces another tough school year in San Bernardino

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Posted: 06/03/2010 04:31:25 PM PDT

Updated: 06/03/2010 06:12:10 PM PDT

On Tuesday night more than 400 students of all ages will arrive at the California Theatre of the Performing Arts for the San Bernardino Adult School graduation.

The ceremony ends a school year fraught with challenges, as the adult school made do with fewer class sections and part-time teachers.

And district officials expect more of the same for the school year ahead.

"The state has reduced funding for adult education, so it will be an adjustment again," said San Bernardino City Unified Superintendent Art Delgado.

The adult school is one of many in the state that were impacted by drastic budget cuts at the start of the last school year.

The San Bernardino school, founded in 1920 by the board of education, let go of 50 part-time instructors and reduced the number of academic and vocational classes.

The school also used to offer English as a second language classes in community locations, but no

longer does that.

The cuts led to a decline in enrollment from about 14,000 students during the 2008-09 school year to 9,000 this year.

In addition there is a much longer waiting list for the English as a second language and academic classes.

"We now have waiting lists, which have never happened in the history of adult education," said school board member Elsa Valdez. "It's a shame because there are a lot of people in this economy in need of getting new job skills."

One positive is students who are

already enrolled stay put, which has led to the big graduating class this time around.

The age level of students is changing as well with more 30 year olds than 22 year olds, enrolling to get re-trained in the current economy.

People interested in summer classes will be out of luck. There won't be summer school in the months ahead because the fall semester starts Aug. 3.

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